No Objection to Declassification in Part 2013/02/13: LOC-HAK-3-6-21-8

ACTION

January 10, 1970

6349

SECRET/EXDIS

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM:

John H. Holdridge

SUBJECT:

Draft Cable on the "Chinese Road" in Laos

I attach a cable (Tab A) which State and Defense want to send to Vientiane concerning Ambassador Godloy's proposal to put a blocking force in the way of any further Chinese road construction toward the Mekong.

This is not really an action cable. The only action proposed is a reiteration of the suggestion that Souvanna get his position publicly on record against further Chinese road construction.

The cable is basically a continuation of an internal dialogue with Vientiane. As such, I see only one real problem with it: it focusses too much on the nuts and bolts, and does not require that Vientiane answer the more fundamental questions as to why they want to take this action. To mend this, I suggest the addition of a new paragraph between paragraphs 3 and 4, to the following effect:

"Before Washington decision can be reached on your proposal for military action, we will require your evaluation as to how the action would fit into your broad scenario. Specifically, we would require your opinion as to (a) importance you assign to this project in view of recent intelligence indications Chinese may intend to stop for present at Muong Houn, (b) importance of this action compared with need for all available efforts meet Communist offensives elsewhere, (c) relationship of this project to general desire to maintain present Laos stalemate at lowest possible level of warfare, and (d) implications of failure if Communists challenged effort to block road progress."

Recommendation: That you approve the cable at Tab A with the addition of the paragraph suggested above.

Approve ______Disapprove _____

DOS. NSS, and JCS reviews completed.

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ACTION: Amembassy VIENTIANE

INFO: Amembassy BANGKOK AmEmbassy SAIGON KKK AmConGen HONG KONG

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SUBJ: Chinese Road Building in Laos

Vientiane 8820; B. Vientiane 41; C. Vientiane 78; REFS: A. Vientiane 81

1. Your plan for an operation south of Muong Houn has been examined by the appropriate agencies in Washington. While it contains the attractive feature of a pre-emptive move calculated to deter the Chinese from moving south of Muong Houn with their road, we believe the plan as presented has important drawbacks. Any operation which is directed against Chinese involvement in Lacs, of course, has most serious policy ramifications. We particularly do not think that it would be wise to mount an operation which would be significantly Americank in character. In addition,

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	att/EA: I Moore: dtm	1/8/70	21449.	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX		
ARANCES!			 	A		

/LC - Mr. Corcoran ... ISA - Mr. Ware (draft)

white House -- Amb. Brown (draft) PCIA -

J . Amb. Johnson

draft)32/ CXXXXXXX Joint Staff - V/Adm. Johnson (ng

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unfavorable aspects include the following: US intervention might result in greater rather than less PRC and/or DRV involvement in western Laos; operation raisesau question of waw! new "front" in Laos at a time when friendly resources are needed for upcoming NVA offensive elsewhere; American rolew would probably become well publicized; PRC attitude toward King and RLG would be adversely affected by American intervention at Lao request.

- 2. We are opposed to King's proposal (ref c) for USAF/RLAF strike against Muong Sai for similar reasons. We do not think that PRC policy of not admitting to road construction in Laos in any way indicates PRC would not actively counter friendly military strikes (formidable AAA installation in Muong Sai area suggest PRC readiness for action).
- 3. We suggest again that RLG set record straight on RLG December 1962 "request". This is one of the few measures which we believe might influence Peking's decision to continue construction and

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would at least provide basis for any subsequent actions which might be taken. Khamphan Panya appears to be somewhat confused about the diplomatic kitory of Chinese road construction in Laos. Only "agreement" for road construction was that signed by Souvanna's government in Khang Khay (Sisoumang Sisaleuamsak) and PRC economic and cultural mission on January 13, 1962, xxxxidix providing for Phong Saly road. PRC merely agreed to consider the Phoumi December 1962 request for extension of this road. Approach we have suggested is designed to invalidate Phoumi request under any interpretation which NEXXX PRC might choose to put on it. Souvanna could note in a press interview, subsequently run in Lao Press, that only valid agreement for road construction was that of January 1962 and this road has been completed. We would suggest that he not refer to construction workers as military (implying PRC violation of Geneva Agreements) nor indicate RLG might kix formally protest to PRC or seize Co-Chairmen with PRC

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violation.	•			
4. While we have not :	yet concluded tha	t military action would	•	
serve a useful purpose	, we would be pr	epared to consider repe	at	-
consider some plan for	r a basically Lao	deterrent operation. R	LA	
		t force. We would prefe		25 25
		tion since it would be re		
garded by enemy virtu	olly as U.S., bu	t if air support is essen	~	
tial, RLAF (including	perhaps B Team) should be used instead diver place T-28 sorties diver	of ted	
from other targets.) I	Plan would not, w	ve assume, provide for i	in-	
cremental increase in	n US or Lao invol	lvement, but for exfiltra	tion,	
		on to hold area by sendi		
		ealize RLA's lack of rea		
reserves,				25
and vulnerability of	C-28 to AAA are	reasons for your recom	menaa-	
tion that US Tacair	·	play key roles in		25
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operation. However, we would like you to look again at what the Lao could do with minimum US involvement.

- 5. We appreciate your informing us expeditiously of RKME RLAF.

 T-28 x bombing of road area. We do expect measures which you and Lao are taking (ref D) will insure that there is no repetition of this incident.
- 6. Please caption telegrams "Chinese Road Building in Laos".
 We regularly repeat messages on this subject to Bangkok, Saigon,
 Hong Kong and CINCPAC, and other addressees when appropriate.

END

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